RESURRECTION OF THE SOUTH

With a Refutation of Some Slanders, and Mention of the Novel, Nicholas Worth.

It may be doubted if the terrible losses we suffered in the Civil War would equal by one-half those inflicted on us since that time, in the policies pursued by the dominant element in the North. Leaving out the appalling loss of life, I am sure they would not.

And some of the efforts which are yet being made to injure us are peculiarly exasperating to a proud, sensitive, brave people, in that they are offensive and insulting.

We may bear with whatever patience we can command, and until they are righted, political, industrial, material wrongs, sectional legislation, the building up of one part of the country at the expense of another, class legislation, resulting in the formation of great trusts, the creation of multi-millionaires, trust magnates, who under the forms of law, are flaunting their defiance in the face of the law, strip and despoil the poorer classes, the plain people. These iniquities fall not upon us alone, some parts of the West are suffering quite as much as we do, and the consumer everywhere being the victim. But when slanderous and malignant attacks are made upon us as a people, upon our customs, habits, manners, our intelligence, our civilization, all patience is gone, and we feel like turning and rending our traducers.

Not all of the Northern newspapers and periodicals are unkind and untruthful in the delineation of our life, as, for instance, the New York Sun and Harper's Weekly recently have had appreciative and kind articles about us and the burdens we must carry, but far too many of them yet, on every occasion, and when there is no occasion, strike at us viperously. As samples of the work done by these calumniators, we shall give only two choice bits of reflection, served by public caterers to a false and depraved appetite, the one sample now a little stale, the other steaming hot from the caldron of ignorance and spite.

A Northern writer in the American edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica has this to say: "In this world of letters, at least, the Southern States have shone by a reflected light, nor is it too much to say that mainly by their connection with the North, the Carolinas have been saved from sinking to the level of Mexico and the Antilles." Wicked mendacity could go no further. Southern literature has not been exploited, if I may here use this word, as has been the Northern, there has been no wide publication and general circulation of it until within recent years, but that we have a literature, much of it distinctive, and some the very best of its kind, no well informed man of letters will deny. A handsome "library" of it, in fifteen large volumes, ten now being out, of which our own Dr. Edwin A. Alderman and Joel Chandler Harris, (the lamented "Uncle Remus") are the editors-in-chief, has come from the press. I am the proud owner of a set of these books, which I value away and beyond anything that has appeared on American literature.

But we "shine by a reflected light." What Northern "light" was 'reflected" by Poe, Lanier, Hayne, Simms, McNeill, Joel Chandler Harris, by that quaint genius Lafcadio Hearn, who, while born in Greece, did some of his best work when living in New Orleans, or what light was cast back by John James Audubon, and by those eminent scientists, LeConte and Maury? From what Northern sources do Thomas Nelson Page, George W. Cable, and dozens of other writers of fiction, whose names will readily occur to the reader, draw their inspiration? Mark Twain, I believe, was somewhat Southern, and during the formative period of his life, was thrown into close contact with our people. Whence came his "light?"

As to the charge that "mainly by their connection with the North, the Carolinas have been saved from sinking to the level of Mexico and the Antilles," we would answer that our connection with that section, not with the people the masses, but with their leaders, from Thad Stevens down to Nelson W. Aldrich and Joseph G. Cannon, has been a fierce struggle to keep them from sinking us to the level, first politically and socially of the West Indian mestizo, and latterly, industrially, to that of the Mexican peon.

Quite recently I have come across this savory morceau in (the January issue) of the American Magazine, from a correspondent, without a word of denial, correction, or explanation from the editor or publisher of that periodical: "All the tyranny, the hardship, the transfer of human stock (negroes,) the flogging, etc., exist in the Southern States just as badly as in Mexico." Not fifty years ago, but right now. To one who was born in the South, and has lived here all his days, whose fathers were slave owners, who himself remembers something of the "system," but never in his life has seen a negro "flogged," such downright, diabolical lying (pardon the rough, but pure Saxon, nothing else fits,) is unthinkably nauseating. And yet we may well suppose that this stupid, but wicked, falsehood is accepted by thousands in the soul-affinitied North, who believe everything, but that God exists and this is his world.

Now and again, some Southerner escapes across the border, and we begin to hear of "intellectual emancipation already giving me great joy," 'raw, rural society where (in the South) there was a suppression of thought." I take these extracts from "Nicholas Worth, being the autobiography of a Southerner," heretofore published in book form, but now appearing serially in the Charlotte Observer.

Nicholas Worth, it is understood, is Mr. Walter H. Page, the able and accomplished editor of the World's Work, himself a North Carolinian (by birth,) and one with whom I am glad to have a slight acquaintance in the years gone by. I have read the book, which is hightly laudatory of the Northern people, giving little praise to the South, and this, when given, being with a you-sweet-but-silly-thing tone, which is little short of contemptuous. Nicholas thinks the Civil War was a costly and most fearful blunder. So now we all think. He is greatly distressed that the Confederate generals, colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, (but mainly the generals and colonels) claimed and took all the best civil offices in the years immediately following the war. God bless the dear old fellows, we had nothing else to give them to show our appreciation of their sacrifices and sufferings. Besides, the same qualities which made them lead in war, would most naturally bring them to the front in civil life.

We dare say that many of the conditions then existing, and some of which Nicholas describes, were not healthful, but the difference between him and some of the others of us, was this: He saw, disapproved, and went away, to criticize and condemn. Some of us also saw, disapproved, but remained to work for improvement. And we have improved, to the point that Mr. Page's thrusts will not hurt us as once they could and did.

The South, and North Carolina especially, is resurgent. We are rising, materially, socially, educationally, politically, intellectually. There is no "intellectual emancipation" permitted to Nicholas Worth in New York, which today he could not have in North Carolina; and if part of this emancipation be to deny the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, as would seem to be the case, Nicholas can come back and have this too—his enjoyment of it here, or elsewhere, or hereafter, being another matter. Nor is there "suppression of thought" in our "rural society," except as to those things about which God-fearing, decent people ought not to think, do not wish to think.

It might be added that nowhere, in this State, could there be found ignorance so "raw" as that of the "cultured" Boston lady, visited by Nicholas, who "didn't know that poor country people in the South had churches of their own, or religion of any kind." These same "poor country people" are better informed about the churches in her country, even to that of Joseph Smith, the Mormon, and others which might be mentioned, did space permit.

The rapid accumulation of wealth in the hands of the favored few, while the masses are impoverished, usually accompanies, if it does not cause, the suppression of thought, but communities in which there is a fair divison of the returns of labor are, ordinarily, those communities in which there is the greatest intellectual independence. Concrete examples: In North Carolina we have few, if any, millionaires; the people are prosperous and every man votes as he pleases. In Pennsylvania where multi-millionaires abound many thousands of the people are very, very poor, and they vote as the bosses order.

If to general material prosperity you add the democratization of knowledge, you have the ideal commonwealth. A few facts and figures to show that we have been fairly successful in bringing about a combination of these happy conditions, and I am done.

About the time Mr. Page left us for Harvard, I doubt if there was a dollar in our State Treasury available for public schools. The fathers, whom he so unmercifully ridicules, had made provision for this, carrying a large fund, set apart for this especial work, through all the throes of Civil War, to have it stolen during the reconstruction period by a gang of plunderers, many of whom were from the land of "intellectual emancipation."

For the school year 1906-7 (it is even more now) we raised by taxation, and expended on the free schools of the State, $2,863,217.79. There are normal, industrial and training schools, for both sexes and races, graded schools in every town of any size, somewhere between seven hundred and one thousand school districts, in which the people have voted special school taxes on themselves, rural schools in every community, with over two thousand rural libraries, and the crowning glory of it all is, that while the negro pays only about one-sixteenth of the taxes, taking my own country as being representative in this respect, his children get their fair per capita distribution of all school tax funds raised.

Our material advancement has been little short of marvelous. The total valuation of all property in North Carolina for 1900, in round numbers, was three hundred million of dollars. In 1908 it was five hundred and seventy-six millions, or an increase of nearly 100 per cent. in eight years. And it is so all over the South, as will appear from the following, which I quote from a recent issue of the Manufacturers' Record: "In the past nine years the assessed value of property in the South has risen to $9,560,000,000, an amount three times as great as the assessed value of 1880, more than twice as great as 1890, and eighty per cent greater than 1900." The figures are convincing, and disprove the statement that the South has been in a condition of stagnation.

We have indeed arisen from the ashes of defeat and disaster, and we shall rise still higher and higher, but, in doing so, may we be kept from holding up our fathers to the scorn and derision of a world not half so good as they were, with all their faults.

We realize that we must press forward until the best that is to be had in civic development is ours, but we shall always love to think of "the tender grace of a day that is dead," of the unaffected simplicity of our old home life, the generous hospitality accorded the stranger who came within our gates, the chivalrous deference shown to our womanhood, and of that superb courage which, in the fateful days falling between 60 and 65, caused the Southern armies, with more than Balaklavan disregard for consequences, to charge, and again to charge, against a mighty host, gathered from all lands, till, at last, "the thin-grey-line," worn out by its own exertions, disappeared, leaving only a sad but glorious memory.—N. A. McLean in Maxton Scottish Chief.

MEREDITH'S FATHER.

Original of "The Great Mel."—Incidents in Novelist's Life.

(Pall Mall Gazette.)

George Meredith used some of his family history for literary purposes in a way that has not been generally recognized. His father, Augustus Meredith, was a Portsmouth naval outfitter, and is probably identical with the Meredith of "Peter Simple." The father of the outfitter was Melchisedec Meredith, a man, apparently, of "independent means." Melchisedec's grandson, when he came to write "Evan Harrington, or He Would Be a Gentleman," conjoined his grandfather's baptismal name with his father's business, and there was Mr. Melchisedec Harrington, "the great Mel," who in the first half dozen lines of the first chapter is "struck off the list of living tailors."

"The Great Mel," it will be remembered, was, "despite his calling," a welcome guest in good county society. He had, "when threats of invasion started up the military fire of us islanders," obtained by a remarkable favor a lieutenancy of militia dragoons. Augustus Meredith was, indeed, not so favored; but in the course of a visit he paid to Bath, the story goes, he was taken for and accepted as a foreign count in disguise. Similarly, "the great Mel" narrates how he himself was in the habit of going to Bath for the season and how the hotel people gave out that he was a marquis, and how he took upon himself to act the part, "with some success and considerable gratification." George Meredith had lived so long that his parentage was mostly forgot, and even in 1861 no one seems to have recognized the origin of "the great Mel."

Those who knew Mr. Meredith's father testify to his courtly air and aristocratic appearance. He was tall and dark, most persuasive in tongue and magnificent in manner. He and his second wife emigrated to South Africa and were well known residents in Cape Town in the early half of the last century. The pair subsequently settled in Southsea, and the novelist, in his youth, was devoid of the solace of a parental home. George's stepmother from the very first was extremely proud of him, and in Cape Town spoke to her friends constantly of his great gifts.

Some little known facts in the novelist's life are connected with the upbringing of his first child. Deserted by his wife and left with a baby in its first infancy, the young author plunged himself in comparative solitude. He found the society of women for some time unbearably painful to him, and, refusing to have a nurse in the house, is said to have bestowed the care of his child upon a boy fifteen years old. This lad reared the little one with gentleness and solicitude, remaining in Mr. Meredith's service for some years. It is an interesting parallel with the somber background of "Richard Feverel," dominated by the hero's father, that inveterate woman hater, Sir Austin. But the mood passed off in the case of the author and a second marriage restored his faith in womanhood. That his writings exhibit the reverse of any bitterness in his feelings toward women is evidence at once of the soundness of his judgment and the depth of his emotions.

There was a parallel, by the way, for the discussion roused by the refusal of the dean of Westminster Abbey to admit the novelist's remains to interment there. Mr. Meredith's name is linked with that of Herbert Spencer and both are spoken of as victims of "regrettable narrow-mindedness." In this connection one may recall the fact that when George Eliot died a proposal for an Abbey burial was immediately set on foot and Spencer urged Huxley to aid the memorialists. Huxley however had too much common sense for this course, and he expressed himself in a breezy fashion that must have cleared away many cobwebs from the synthetic philosopher's brain.

"However much I may lament the circumstance," he wrote, "Westminster Abbey is a Christian church and a pantheon and the dean thereof is officially a Christian priest, and we ask him to bestow exceptional Christian honors by his burial in the Abbey. George Eliot is known not only as a great writer, but as a person whose life and opinions were in notorious antagonism to Christian practice in regard to marriage and Christian theory in regard to dogma. How am I to tell the dean that I think he ought to read over the body of a person who did not repent of what the church considers mortal sin a service not one solitary proposition in which she would have accepted for truth while she was alive?"

This was nearly thirty years ago, but it sets out the line for Abbey burials which is worth remembering when any great man dies.

GEN. JACKSON'S FAMOUS DUEL

Wanted Col. Avery to "do Without Dinner Until the Business is Done."

Ex-Judge A. C. Avery, of Morganton, has in his possession the challenge to a duel which Andrew Jackson wrote and sent to Judge Avery's grandfather, Colonel Waightstill Avery in 1788. It reads as follows:

"When a man's feelings and character" (General Jackson was not "well-up," it would seem, in orthography) "are injured he ought to seek a speedy redress; you rec'd a few lines from me yesterday and undoubtedly you understand me. My character you have injured; and further you have insulted me in the presence of a court and a large audience. I therefor call upon you as a gentleman to give me satisfaction for the same. I further call upon you to give me an answer immediately without Equivocation and I hope that you can do without dinner until the business is done; for it is consistant with the character of a gentleman when he injuries a man to make speed reparation, therefor I hope that you will not fail in meeting me this day from yr Hbl St.

Yrs
ANDW JACKSON.

"P. S. This evening after court is adjourned."

Colonel Avery was elected the first Attorney-General of North Carolina and practiced law in Mecklenburg county, Rowan, and in the new county of Burke, which was established in 1777. It is in this county that many of his descendants have continued to reside.

He and Jackson knew each other well and the trouble that led to the duel came about when in a lawsuit Avery the opposing counsel of Jackson ridiculed the position taken by the latter who had preceded him in the argument. Jackson became offended, consequently the challenge.

"Colonel Avery was brought up a Puritan, he was graduated at Princeton with high honors in 1766 and remained there a year as a tutor, under the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, and the famous Dr. Witherspoon who signed the Declaration of Independence. Colonel Avery was a Presbyterian and was opposed on principle to duelling, but yielded to the custom of time, accepted challenge, and went to the field with Colonel Adair of Kentucky as his second. After the usual preliminaries he allowed Jackson to shoot at him, but he did not return the fire. Having shown that he was not afraid to be shot at Colonel Avery walked up to Jackson and delivered a lecture to him, very much after the same manner that a father would lecture a son. He was very calm and talked to the brave young man in a dispassionate and high-toned way which was listened to with great attention by the second of both parties who agreed that the trouble must end at this point, and so then and there a reconciliation was effected between these two brave men.

"Colonel Avery took the challenge home and filed it."

[Though finger-worn and time-stained it is easily deciphered. I saw it only a few days ago in the home of Colonel Avery's distinguished grandson, Judge Avery.—Editor Deaf and Dumb Magazine.]